

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Harry doesn't take the easy way out.

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... No. He wouldn't take the easy way out. Maybe if someone besides him had gotten hurt he might have been more tempted, but so far since arriving in this universe, he'd been the only one who had died. Everyone else this mysterious cabal had killed had died long before he'd shown up.

Asking for information on Bellatrix now would be admitting defeat in a way Harry's ego simply wouldn't allow. Especially when ultimately, he had his own ways of figuring out what the hell was going on with the escaped Death Eater.

"That will not be necessary, Death. I will do my own investigation."

Death just smirks knowingly, as if that's exactly what she expected.

"Of course, Master."

And then she promptly drops to her knees and takes out his cock, wrapping those plump dark lips around his member to begin sucking him off. Harry wishes he could say he was surprised, but suffice to say, at this point he's not...

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"You failed. I am disappointed in you, Bellatrix."

Kneeling on the floor of the chamber, Bellatrix flinches, keeping her head lowered as a figure cloaked in shadow looms over her.

"I have no excuses, Mistress. Punish me as you see fit..."

The now-gendered figure scoffs at that, shaking her head.

"I have no wish to punish you. I merely want results. What stopped you from killing the wizard? More than that, how could you possibly have been unmasked in the process?"

Bellatrix shivers.

"He was... more capable than I expected. He was especially well-versed in countering Unforgiveables, as though he had additional experience with such things. I was caught off guard by his competence."

The other witch is quiet for a moment at that, processing Bellatrix's words.

"... Do you believe you could take him down in another duel if you were to face him again?"

Bellatrix's hesitation speaks volumes. Silence fills the chamber, until finally she hangs her head.

"I do not know, Mistress. It is possible I would fail... he might be too much for me to handle on my own."

"Tch."

The other witch's frustrated noise is followed up by a third voice calling out in the shadowed chamber.

"It is not just his prowess in combat that is the issue. There is also the simple fact that we have killed him twice now and he has come back both times."

Another figure cloaked in shadows steps in at that point, with Bellatrix remaining on her knees and keeping her head bowed in supplication. The first shadowy figure turns to the second, tilting her own head to the side.

"You fully believe he is resurrecting then?"

“It is the only thing that makes sense. You felt the connection when you performed the ritual with the newspaper. You sensed no protection at that time, not like we sense now when we perform similar rituals.”

“... True...”

“And then there is the Wizengamot Chamber. You saw him expire with your own eyes, confirming that my method worked... only for him to get back up again. He came back to life, likely both times. It is questionable whether even the Killing Curse could put him down for good.”

Silence reigns for a moment before the first figure makes a noise of disgust.

“If this is true, then how? How is he surviving every death? How is he coming back to life?”

From within the folds of their robes, the second figure pulls forth a tome and drops it onto the floor between them and Bellatrix. All three peer down at it curiously.

The Tales of Beedle the Bard stare back up at all of them.

“... Children’s Tales? What is the meaning of this?”

With a wave of their hand, the newcomer flips open the tome to the relevant pages, until it stops on a particular story. *The Tale of the Three Brothers*.

“He’s not exactly being very subtle, is he? The Deathly Hallows are considered little more than a myth... and yet here we have a wizard lord who has come from nowhere and claimed it as his very own name. I posit the reason that none of our methods have taken is rather simple... Harry Hallows has Mastered Death.”

Silence reigns once more as the first figure processes this claim.

“... Ridiculous. And yet...”

“What other explanation do we have?”

The second figure’s words cut through the air like a knife. Finally, the first lets out a shuddering breath.

“Then what shall be our next steps?”

“... I have a few ideas.”

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The next morning, Harry sets out to get to the bottom of the mystery of Bellatrix Lestrange *his* way. First and foremost is the obvious... he needs to ascertain whether it’s actually Bellatrix or not. There’s every chance that his attacker is drinking polyjuice or using self-transfiguration as a back up in case the first layers of their disguise get peeled back, after all.

And fortunately for Harry, he has a way of checking on people who should be dead... the Resurrection Stone. All he has to do is take the stone and turn it three times to try and summon Bellatrix back to the mortal world.

Nothing happens, signaling that she’s very much still alive. But then that brought into question the official story... that Bellatrix had died on Azkaban along with Sirius back in the day. Obviously she hadn’t, but then who had pulled her out of that dreary, magic-forsaken place?

In the end, Harry had no real choice... but to go and see for himself. Obviously Azkaban was one of the last places he wanted to visit given past experiences with Dementors. But at the same time, if he wanted to get to the heart of the matter, he needed to know more. And... he would be lying if he said part of him wasn’t curious exactly what had happened to Sirius Black in this universe.

Not that Harry thought the other man to still be alive, the chances of that were vanishingly small... but the exact manner of his death now piqued Harry’s

curiosity. And so, after letting Fleur know that he would be 'out' for the day, Harry makes his way over to Azkaban under the cover of his Invisibility Cloak.

Curiously, the prison is defunct in the modern day of this universe. Outliers like Bellatrix notwithstanding, wizards by and large made up the vast majority of Azkaban's occupants. When they all died, the prison really didn't have much of a point anymore and so the handful of remaining female prisoners were moved to other accommodations from what Harry was able to find out.

The Dementors were left behind, all but quarantined to the island. And so, Harry was effectively entering an abandoned prison infested with the blasted things. There was no actual people for him to slip by or avoid being detected by at least, but also... the Dementors were completely off their already short leash.

That's a perfectly fine state of affairs for Harry however, who has had several lifetimes to learn how to deal with a Dementor in a more permanent fashion than a simple Expecto Patronum would allow. And so, as the first of the creatures arrive to confront him, able to easily detect his soul even through the Invisibility Cloak, Harry doesn't bother with niceties. He simply removes his cloak, pulls out the Elder Wand... and smiles crookedly.

"Expecto Patronum Maxima."

The sheer amount of power that the juiced up version of Expecto Patronum requires disqualifies the vast majority of wizards and witches from ever casting it, but obviously Harry is built different. The stag that explodes forth from the Elder Wand is as big as the ruined prison hallway Harry finds himself standing in and glows ten times as bright as a usual Patronus might.

It slams into the Dementors in front of it with glowing white horns and leaves behind empty black rags, the soul eating creatures that once inhabited them completely vanishing in its wake. Meanwhile, the stag patronus doesn't stop there either... it keeps going, charging through the prison, hunting more of its prey.

Harry walks behind it, uncaring as the Dementor population of the island is thoroughly decimated. He makes his way along corridors, heading for where he knows Bellatrix's old prison cell would have been. Once he arrives outside of it, he stares inward for a moment... but obviously there's nothing to be seen. Of course there isn't, the place has been empty for years.

With a flick of the Elder Wand, Harry wordlessly casts what is rapidly becoming his most used spell in this universe, reversing time in a generalized area that he lets expand outwards to encompass the entire island. Not like there's anyone around to complain, after all.

Reversing time far enough eventually brings him back to a moment where the cell is occupied by Bellatrix once more. He watches a spectral version of her rant and rave for a bit, acting as crazy as ever, and then pushes time forward until finally... it happens.

Bellatrix lays quietly on the floor as a dark figure steps up to her cell. Harry watches as the bars prove to be no obstacle, the cloaked figure easily opening the cell. He watches as Bellatrix lifts her head... and her eyes widen as a spell is cast on her, one that causes her to pass out on the spot.

The witch is not killed... she's taken from the cell, captured and brought elsewhere from the look of things. Harry sighs and rewinds time again, making his way through the facility until he finds the place where the shadowy figure enters Azkaban... and goes on a killing spree.

She doesn't let the Dementors eat Azkaban's occupants, at least. A small mercy to be sure, but still... the way she clears out every wizard in the prison is a lot cleaner than what could otherwise have happened. It's almost clinical how she goes about it... Sirius in particular doesn't even lift his head to see the flash of green that ends his life.

But there's no doubt in Harry's mind that one thing is certain... Bellatrix is not killed in the Azkaban massacre. She goes missing instead, vanishing entirely. Which... quite frankly, doesn't make much sense. Someone should have noticed that. Someone should have probably called out the fact that Bellatrix Lestrange

was just gone, while the other handful of imprisoned witches had been left alive and the men had all been killed but their corpses had remained behind.

Instead, Bellatrix had been marked as dead in the official records. And that... that smacked of corruption to Harry. Something was rotten with that and he suspected he knew exactly who might be behind such a thing.

Narcissa Malfoy was, after all, Bellatrix Lestrange's sister. The two were part of the original trio of Black Sisters alongside Andromeda Tonks. All three had gone very different directions in life, with Andromeda in particular being disowned entirely for marrying a muggleborn. However... if anyone could quietly alter the records and hide Bellatrix's disappearance, it would be Narcissa. Nobody else would have the motive or the influence, Harry didn't think.

Though that did beg the question of who the short woman he'd seen in Filch's memories was. It wasn't Narcissa, she was taller than that. And yet, this new figure didn't seem to match up to her, either because they had gotten a better disguise in the time between Filch's encounter and this massacre, or because they were two different people.

Could this incident at Azkaban have been Narcissa? Somehow, Harry didn't think so. But he had no doubt in his mind that she was involved.

And wouldn't you know it... Harry had an invitation to meet with Narcissa at her place of residence. A trap? Perhaps... but he couldn't deny that it would probably get him some answers. Even if Narcissa wasn't directly involved with her sister's breakout, Harry fully believed she had to know Bellatrix was alive. And he would be very curious to find out what else she knew.

The only question was... how should he approach her?

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!